



Electronic Meetings Advisory Committee

Monday, October 15, 2012

2:00 p.m.

- **Main Location: Cisco, 1801 Bayberry Ct. #200, Richmond VA 23226**
- **Remote Location: George Mason University (Fairfax Campus), University Hall 3001**

The Electronic Meetings Advisory Committee held its third meeting on Monday, October 15, 2012. The meeting was conducted as an audio/visual meeting pursuant to § 2.2-3708 of the Code of Virginia, using Cisco TelePresence Technology. The main meeting location, attended by Delegate Joe May, chairman of the Committee, and Senator John Miller, was held at a Cisco facility in Richmond. Delegate Ken Plum joined the meeting from the Fairfax Campus of George Mason University.

The main objective of the meeting was to conduct an audio/visual meeting using state-of-the-art technology, in order to provide the members a better understanding of evolving technologies, and to inform their discussions concerning electronic meetings and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Delegate May noted that when the provisions related to electronic meetings were drafted, the laws were restrictive because there was not much good technology available at the time, and it was cumbersome. He said the Advisory Committee is looking for ways to improve public meetings for members and citizens, and is interested in everyone's feedback about this meeting. Virginia does not like to rush into policy changes, but in this area, it might be time to move ahead.

Cisco has partnered with the Commonwealth in the 4-VA Higher Education Initiative, designed to create access and affordability for higher education. Currently in a pilot stage, Cisco installed TelePresence labs at the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, George Mason University, and James Madison University. Cisco and the Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth graciously allowed JCOTS to use these facilities to experience the technology in a public meeting context.

The Advisory Committee received a briefing on the 4-VA initiative from a panel of speakers, who participated in the meeting from the sites in Richmond and George Mason, as well as California. Secretary of Education Laura Fornash welcomed provided a brief overview of the initiative. Dr. Angel Cabrera, President of George Mason University, provided a university perspective. He thanked the Advisory Committee for not just discussing how technology can improve government, but for taking the step to experience it first-hand. He noted that when used thoughtfully, technology can help improve outcomes. In the education realm, technology can be used in synchronous and asynchronous manners to help learners adapt education to meet their

personal needs. Technology can also help to respond to the budgetary pressures currently facing higher education.

Dr. Joy Hughes next addressed the panel. Dr. Hughes is a Vice President and CIO of George Mason University, and also serves as the director of 4-VA. She provided an overview of the goals of 4-VA, what has been accomplished so far, and what the next steps will be for the program. A copy of her presentation is available on the JCOTS website.

Carol Stillman, a Strategic Business Development Manager at Cisco, joined the meeting from California. She outlined Cisco's perspective on the public-private partnership with Virginia, as well as Cisco's perspective about education and technology. A copy of her presentation is available on the JCOTS website.

After the completion of the 4-VA discussion, the Advisory Committee heard from experts in distance learning from Virginia Tech, led by Anne Moore, the Associate Vice President for Learning Technologies. Many of the current concerns about the use of electronic meetings concern the ability to effectively communicate -- an issue that has been studied and addressed by the distance learning community. The presentation focused on the variety of technologies along that can be used in a meeting setting, and the benefits and drawbacks of each. The technologies range from the high-end, such as the TelePresence, to low-end asynchronous applications. A copy of the presentation is available on the JCOTS website.

After the presentations, the members engaged in discussion about electronic meetings. It was noted that policy should aim to derive the maximum benefit from technology while minimizing the downsides. Members of the public noted that nothing in the current law would prohibit a public body from utilizing this type of technology in public meetings. One criticism of the technology used in this meeting was that the participants could not see all of the other remote participants on the screen at once -- who was visible at the various sites was dependent upon who was speaking at the time.

Delegate May suggested that some thought should be given to generating well-equipped audio/visual meeting locations around the state that public bodies could use. Locations for future consideration included courts, universities, and libraries.

Delegate May requested that Delegate Plum and Senator Miller generate some guidelines for the use of electronic meetings, and a proposed pilot program for JCOTS to experiment with a variety of electronic meeting technologies in the next year. The group voted to approve several proposals that had been discussed at past meetings, and to recommend them from JCOTS. These proposals were to remove the limitation on the number of electronic meetings that a public body could hold annually; to allow regional public bodies to use electronic meetings; to consider whether the requirements for electronic meetings should be different if utilizing an audio/visual connection as opposed to a simple teleconference; and to look at ways to use technology to increase public access. A roll call vote was taken, and the four proposals were adopted unanimously. They will be presented to JCOTS at its December meeting.